

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Claim 1 is amended. Claims 19-21 are added. The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claim 1 (Currently amended) A method for producing a food product comprising:

- a) contacting meat with lactobionic acid in an amount sufficient to reduce the water loss upon freezing and subsequent thawing of the meat based food product by 2% or more compared to the water loss of a similar food product prepared without lactobionic acid; and
- b) producing a food product from the meat contacted with lactobionic acid, wherein the food product comprises between 0.1 and 20 % (weight/weight) lactobionic acid.

Claim 2 (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising mixing minced meat with lactobionic acid.

Claim 3 (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising treating pieces of meat with lactobionic acid.

Claim 4 (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising tumbling meat with lactobionic acid.

Claim 5 (Original) The method of claim 1 comprising marinating meat with lactobionic acid.

Claim 6 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 comprising freezing the food product.

Claim 7 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 comprising heating the food product.

Claim 8 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the meat is fish meat.

Claim 9 (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the food product is surimi.

Claim 10 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the food product is an emulsified meat product.

Claim 11 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the meat is from beef, pork, chicken, and/or turkey.

Claim 12 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the lactobionic acid is in the form of sodium, potassium, magnesium, or calcium lactobionate.

Claim 13 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the lactobionic acid is produced by enzymatic oxidation of lactose.

Claim 14 (Previously presented) A meat based food product comprising between 0.1 and 20 % (weight/weight) lactobionic acid.

Claims 15-16 (Canceled)

Claim 17 (Previously presented) The meat based food product of claim 14, comprising between 0.2 and 10 % (weight/weight) lactobionic acid.

Claim 18 (Previously presented) The meat based food product of claim 14, comprising between 0.5 and 5 % (weight/weight) lactobionic acid.

Claim 19 (New) The method of claim 1 comprising contacting meat with lactobionic acid in an amount sufficient to reduce the water loss upon freezing and subsequent thawing of the meat based food product by 5% or more compared to the water loss of a similar food product prepared without lactobionic acid.

Claim 20 (New) The method of claim 1 comprising contacting meat with lactobionic acid in an amount sufficient to reduce the water loss upon freezing and subsequent thawing of the meat based food product by 10% or more compared to the water loss of a similar food product prepared without lactobionic acid.

Claim 21 (New) The method of claim 1 comprising contacting meat with lactobionic acid in an amount sufficient to reduce the water loss upon freezing and subsequent thawing of the meat based food product by 15% or more compared to the water loss of a similar food product prepared without lactobionic acid.